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SUBJECT: COLOMBIA: FY09 JULIA TAFT REFUGEE FUND NOMINATION  
-- PASTORAL SOCIAL

REF: SECSTATE 14280

¶1. (U) Post is pleased to nominate local Catholic charity Pastoral Social for a \$20,000 USD grant from the Julia Taft Refugee Fund for a micro-credit/small grants program for a group of internally displaced persons (IDP) in Medellin, Colombia.

#### Filling A Gap

¶2. (U) During a recent field visit with PRM DAS William Fitzgerald and PRM/ECA Office Director Eleanor Nagy, we identified a critical gap in resources in the Pastoral Social assistance program for IDP women in the Granizal community in Medellin, Colombia. The Pastoral Social program provides 60 IDP women (and a small number of vulnerable women from the host community) counseling and job training to work in bakeries, clothing production, and beauty salons. The purpose of the program is to teach the women to become self-sufficient in satisfying their basic needs and to better integrate into the community. Most of the participants were displaced from rural areas and need assistance in transitioning to living and working in an urban job market and environment.

¶3. (U) The Pastoral Social program has been successful in providing the women life and job skills training; however, once the participants have completed the training there are few available funds for start-up costs associated with productive activities. Post proposes that PRM award \$20,000 USD from the Julia Taft Refugee Fund to provide this group of IDP women capital for productive activities that will allow them to apply the skills they have learned in the program.

¶4. (U) We propose that these funds be awarded to Pastoral Social, an established and well-respected Catholic charity that has experience providing job training to IDPs. The participants in the program, individually or in groups, will develop proposals for productive activities based on their training and receive funding as a micro-credit or small grant from the Julia Taft funding. The group as a whole will review and approve the different proposals, with Pastoral Social providing management and administrative oversight. In addition to providing much needed capital, the proposal development and review process will further reinforce the self-sufficiency and job skills training the women have receive in the program.

#### Pastoral Social

¶5. (U) Pastoral Social was established in Colombia in 1977 and is a part of Caritas International, a confederation of 154 Catholic organizations present in 198 countries. Its programs focus on fighting against poverty and oppression in order to create a more just society based on solidarity, social justice, peace, and respect for human rights. Receipt of a copy of the organization's code of conduct is pending.

¶6. (U) The UN High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) Medellin sub-office supports this proposal. UNHCR works closely with

Pastoral Social on IDP programs in Medellin. Pastoral Social's programs are well-known to Post.

#### Justification

¶17. (U) Post proposes to provide this group of IDP women \$20,000 USD after meeting with them during a field visit to Granizal in April. During this time, we visited a clothing production shop run by eight women from the group. The women involved with the project explained that business was going well, but expanding the business was not possible due to the lack of funding. Additionally, we heard from many others in the group that they would like to start a similar business like a bakery or beauty salon in the neighborhood if they had funding to buy equipment and supplies.

¶18. (U) The Granizal community is a high-density, poverty-stricken area in Medellin with a large IDP population. Violence and crime is high in this part of the city. Working in the neighborhood with their own businesses provides the most accommodating environment for most of these women. Many are single women headed households with young children, and working together in small businesses allows them the flexibility to care for their children and remain close to home. Additionally, traveling across the city for work can be difficult and expensive.

¶19. (U) In the six months since RefCoord last visited this group of IDP women, they have made major strides in regaining confidence and control of their lives. In the first visit in October of last year, the women timidly recounted harrowing stories of violent displacement from their homes and the death of their husbands or children. Now, after completing

the Pastoral Social program, they energetically and confidently talked about their hopes and dreams of having their own businesses and moving forward with a productive, positive new life. The funding provided by the Julia Taft Refugee Fund will help these women to continue to progress on the road to recovery and self-sufficiency.

¶10. (U) For further information, please contact Scott Higgins at HigginsSC@state.gov.  
Brownfield